

# ***Global Possibilities***

With the right combination of creativity  
and international understanding,  
the advertising agency  
will play a very important role  
in creating global advertising campaigns  
for the approaching  
open market economy of the world.



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In an article in *Adweek* from May 8, 1989, John Carroll cited some convincing survey results that deserve serious consideration: "81% of Britain's adult population approves of advertising; 72% of American consumers maintain that advertising insults their intelligence." (Carroll, p. 28) What has the American advertising industry done to elicit such a negative response? How do British agencies manage to gain such credibility?

In general, while American advertising tends to insult viewer intelligence, British advertising utilizes a learned approach that is witty, entertaining, and worthy of selling the product. Although the ads may appear to insult blokes, blockheads, punks or airheads, they poke *good-humored* fun and still manage to get their point across without demeaning the audience's mentality.

This discussion will focus on the fact that American advertising agencies could gain some useful insight from their European counterparts, and that, with the approaching 1992 open market economy in Europe, there is great potential for global advertising led by joint cooperation between agencies on both sides of the Atlantic.

According to Paul de Win, Director General of the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), "One can't say that there is one single trend in advertising today and in marketing activities all over Europe, but that there is a trend to try to find a way in (to the impending open market)." (Day, p. 103) Currently, global advertising is handled in a variety of ways. The four most common methods include:

- 1) Develop separate culturally relevant campaigns for each country in which the product is marketed;
- 2) Develop campaigns in three or four major languages for distribution in different regions where the natives should speak at least one of the languages;
- 3) Develop one version of a campaign and allow translators at affiliated offices to make voiceovers of the same script for each country; and
- 4) Develop one single campaign to be used in every country with no alterations.

Which method works most effectively? The answer is yet to be determined.

However, the best campaign method would be dependent upon the product and its target market. The strategy, the selling premises, the style, and the marketing objectives are all important, but the creativity holds the audience's attention. In the words of David Meln, Business Development Director for Saatchi & Saatchi, London, "*Creativity is the key to success.*" (AEJMC tape)

With 1992 imminent on the global horizon, the businessmen of the world are intent upon finding their niche in the new, unexplored consumer territory of global advertising. As these entrepreneurs find products for new markets and new markets for their products, the role of marketers and advertisers grows in importance. The question remains, however, how to reach the global consumer, and how to get the advertising message to this consumer in a manner in which he will comprehend.

Once a target market has been selected and marketing and advertising objectives and strategies are set, the actual execution of the campaign begins. With a creative touch, the advertisements should reach out to everyone in the target market, regardless of nationality, and show them that this product is for them.

The year 1992 is the mental target date for the elimination of trade barriers within the European Community (EC). More importantly, it is viewed as a global movement, involving the majority of the developed world. "Behind the open-market idea is a new attitude that seems to be sweeping the world. In the Soviet Union, it is called glasnost; in the EC, the word often heard is 'transparency.'" (White, p. 71) One must remember that sales are the top priority with marketers and advertisers, which places the focus on the product. In general, most products can transcend the global boundaries; however, there are always exceptions. Products which have proven themselves to be global standards are those such as Marlboro cigarettes, Lux soap, Heinz ketchup, and Pampers disposable diapers. The list of giants continues with Coca-Cola, Kodak film, MacDonald's hamburgers, Benetton clothing, IBM computers, and Guinness beer. The general categories of alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, automobiles, computers, consumer electronics, youth fashion, pop music, and laundry detergent seem to have the

strongest global capabilities. Mike Dowdall, Unilever's London-based detergents coordinator, says there are two requirements that make a product successful globally: "The brand's core position must be relevant in each country, and the expression of that core position must work in each market." (Wentz, p. 44) Products which are very regional or national are exceptions to the rule, and edible items often fall into this category.

With the trade barriers removed for the free passage of goods, the communication barrier is the next to be penetrated. Advertisers must find a strategy that will work for all of the targeted countries, and then speak to each nationality as a group and as individuals. According to David Meln, international advertising has been around for a long time, and has proven itself effective. Meln's theory is that, "Big ideas are always key ... and if there are fundamental differences, you just have to be more imaginative in overcoming them in the promotion and advertising work you do." (AEJMC tape) The basic concept of advertising — whether local, regional, national, or global — is to make each consumer in the target market feel as though he is the only one being spoken to.

The most important barrier to be crossed is that of communication. Although this can be difficult, it is not impossible. Contemplating the past 10 years, Bill Buford, publisher of *Granta* magazine, has noticed, "It's much easier now for ideas to go back and forth between countries. The cultural position is an internationalist one, reinforced by political changes like the upcoming confederation of Europe in 1992." (*Mirabella*, p. 69) In the areas of language, music, visuals and cultural idiosyncracies, a common thread can often be found for each product and market, and by exploiting the similarities before looking for the differences, David Meln says the advertiser can break down the communication barrier.

Language is the biggest problem because in today's society, it is through speech that people do most of their communicating. Michael Reinartz, Director of Visual Communications for Nestlé, said, "It's unrealistic to expect people who have lived their whole lives ... speaking a certain language, to suddenly favour a language they don't feel comfortable with." (Day, p. 77) There are several very different languages spoken in the

United States and Europe, but no single international language. English has become the global “business language,” but the average consumer may not speak English. Paul de Win supports this idea by asking, “But what about the man in the street, the real guy who represents the market? He will continue to read his newspapers and look at his TV programmes in his mother tongue.” (Day, p.105) Even within the United States, the need for hispanic advertising is becoming more and more prevalent — the hispanic market is a large one, and marketers need to reach these consumers.

A second tool of communication is music. Many professionals in the fields of marketing and advertising feel that since there is no universal language, music may be able to fill this gap. Reinarz goes so far as to say, “Music is an international ‘language.’” He refers to it in terms of radio, adding, “It’s a target medium, because we will probably get a high level of young people.” (Day, p. 77) Music *has* been transcending boundaries for hundreds of years — classical music has entertained international audiences and is now followed by pop music, which has a culture of its own. There are ads today which are entirely musical, such as the one for Cheer laundry detergent. Other ads are based on the pop music scene, and feature performers such as Michael Jackson, Madonna, Elton John, and George Michael.

Another important aspect of advertising communication is the visuals. Graphic designers realized the need to develop a set of international symbols, and these are rapidly gaining popularity. Michael Peters, Chairman and Creative Director of Michael Peters Group PLC, says, “... (W)e have learned through design the whole business of a visual iconography — a set of symbols and ideas that are translatable across barriers and regardless of language.” (Day, p. 133) Many packages, especially in the European market, are universal — they have text in three or more languages, and appear on store shelves throughout the continent with no alteration. From the business perspective, this is a cost-efficient idea. From the communication perspective, it is a giant leap. It means that people everywhere are exposed to one item that they can all recognize. And if it works for packaging, it is possible that it could work for advertising. “(B)ecause those

companies (such as Perrier) have redefined, reworked their packaging, ... people are able to understand and appreciate a kind of so-called graphic common denominator," Peters said. (Day, p. 134)

As an art field, graphic design follows international trends. Magazines, billboards and advertisements in every European country and the United States are of the same mold — what is "hip" in one country is "hip" in the next. With this commonality in mind, advertisers may find that using visuals as the main communication tool in a campaign (such as Marlboro has with the Marlboro man) is the way of globalisation.

However, advertisers must keep in mind that each country — or region — has its idiosyncracies. These could ruin the globality of a campaign, or they could call for regional adaptations. Reinartz says, "Europe is an amalgam of various cultures and languages and, whether we have frontiers or not, that is completely irrelevant." (Day, p. 75) On this thought, local jargon is one very important consideration. For example, Europeans do **not** use the word "diet." Imported American soft drinks are products that fall into this category; thus, "Diet Coke" becomes "Coca-Cola Lite" in several countries. A product with the word "diet" in its name would have a negative connotation and would not sell.

Humor, too, falls under the category of cultural idiosyncracies. The type of humor used in the United Kingdom, for instance, is more sarcastic, and requires more thought than the slapstick or surface humor found in most American advertisements. The role of humor in advertisements varies according to the product category, but in general, humor holds a more important role in European advertisements, especially in the United Kingdom.

Appearances and body language can also vary from country to country. The "Eurolook" differs somewhat from the look of American models, but this too is changing. More and more, the "American" model is Asian, African, or Hispanic; globalisation is rapidly taking effect in this area. An American fashion magazine recently reinforced this point by stating, "... Eurasian chic is moving into print advertising and the Ameri-

can mainstream.” (*Mirabella*, p. 70) Designer Geoffrey Beene agreed, “World trade is going global ... why should that look not be represented in our shows and shows worldwide?” (*Mirabella*, p. 70)

Where does all of this lead? Is global advertising a realistic possibility? Will we see more of it? Is European advertising right and American advertising wrong? No, of course not. In fact, there is no right or wrong in any style of advertising ... everything is a matter of opinion and luck. What should be taken into consideration are the lessons learned from studying the European tactics. Overall, the Americans have taken the Leo Burnett philosophy of “inherent drama” just a little too far. American advertising is filled with harried housewives standing on their heads to clean the bathroom, and yuppies drooling over anything new and materialistic. By incorporating the idea that the people in the target audience are not intellectually incapacitated and can appreciate more than just slapstick comedy, even humor can be used.

To create an effective global campaign, the left and right brain must work together to creatively communicate. Each ad in a global campaign should be adapted to the country or region where it is being run. We are not one and the same, regardless of how hard we try to be. To expect an American audience to understand an Italian commercial would be the equivalent of asking the British to drive on the right. A happy medium is not impossible to achieve, though. If an ad is created with the right dosage of humor, a bed of appropriate music, and strong visuals, the translations in each country *will* work. There is no perfect solution; a formula must be created for every product that hits the global market, just as a new formula is created for every product that hits the American media.

What is the role of the *agency* in an international setting? Paul Curtis, Group Marketing Director for the International Distillers & Vinters Group, said, “(An agency is) a bank of experience. A *global* experience, which we, as a Client, can draw on and use effectively.” (Day, p. 92) A single agency may not have the experience Curtis refers to, but more and more agencies are merging; bigger agencies are incorporating the smaller

ones. By combining forces, even a group of smaller agencies can become a strong global unit. The top-grossing worldwide agencies are not individuals, but what are referred to as "mega-groups" by *Advertising Age*. Examples of these mega-groups are Saatchi & Saatchi Co. PLC, WPP Group PLC, The Ogilvy Group, Omnicom, and Interpublic Group of Companies. According to R. Craig Endicott, "Problems (of the world's mega-holding companies) range from client conflicts created by merged units to the need to pool billings among agency units to give them more clout and make them more competitive." (Endicott, p. 2)

An agency such as London's Gold Greenlees Trott PLC knows that in order to compete in the worldwide market, they must first establish a solid base of international agencies. The intent is to have an agency that is equipped to handle the new regional clients, and a network of agencies to execute international campaigns. GGT has begun buying agencies around the United States; the most recent acquisition being GSD&M, headquartered in Austin, Texas. GGT's policy is to leave the day-to-day management of the agency to the persons who were in control at the time of takeover. However, GGT will search for new clients in the regions where they hold agencies, and send them to their new acquisitions, such as GSD&M in the southwest United States. GSD&M President Roy Spence said that the two agencies have similar visions for the future. "'We're looking 10 years down the road,' he said. 'People will be doing business around the world, just like we do state to state (now).'" (Stanush, p.1)

The idea behind mergers such as GGT and GSD&M is one that sounds good in concept, but may not always work, according to a representative of British Satellite Broadcasting (BSB). He said, "One of the biggest problems I've encountered over the last few years is this great game that is talked by most multinational agencies about 'integrating' communications and different elements drawn together within the company. I've never seen it work ... There's usually no integration between the companies." (Day, p. 125)

What an agency needs to do is find smaller companies that want to expand into the



global marketplace and assist in their marketing and communications. Ronald Beatson, Director-General of the European Association of Advertising Agencies (EAAA), supports this theory: "I believe it should be the advertising agency which should *initiate* this sort of discussion and say; We are not in a protected position any more." (Day, p. 112) He is of the opinion that it is the responsibility of the agency to use its knowledge to instruct the company in its endeavors. The agency must research the field, understand international policies on trade and advertising, and be able to communicate an effective sales message to the target audience of the company's product. How this is to be accomplished is another unknown at the present time. A representative of Britain's Super Channel says, "The advertiser who is now *experimenting* with those new forms of communication will be the one that comes out on top in 10-15 years time." (Day, p. 119)

As the global market continues to grow, the need for international advertising campaigns will also strengthen in importance. Agencies will form partnerships to bridge nationalities, and ideas will be exchanged in order to expand creative horizons. There will be experimentation, and within the next few years, the search for global possibilities will reach a climactic high as the solutions begin to emerge. The one factor which will remain true is that with the key of creativity, there are infinite global possibilities to be unlocked.

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